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SEASONING CANNED FOODS

As the winter advances, homemakers depend more on the cans and jars on the pantry shelf to complete menus. Every family has certain preferences in seasoning which the homemaker keeps in mind when canning. Commercial canned foods are seasoned for what is considered the average taste, to which the able cook can add touches of her own.

Some families like a little extra mustard and molasses added when canned baked beans are warmed for serving. Many put a ham bone or a piece of bacon in with string beans when heating them. Other suggestions are a trace of curry flavor with canned limas, a mint leaf with peas. Some people put a teaspoonful of additional sugar with any can of vegetables that are supposed to be a little sweet - corn, succotash, or peas. Horseradish, onion, and celery are flavors that transform plain canned tomato juice into tomato cocktail.

The flavor that is so distinctive in French creamed spinach is a bit of nutmeg, and it may be used equally well with canned spinach. Lemon juice is one of the housekeepers' friends when it comes to toning up canned vegetables, including spinach. Onion is perhaps the very first flavoring accessory on the list. A good way to add it is to mince the onion and cook it until soft but not brown in a little butter or other fat, then add it to the heated canned vegetable, or use it as the basis of a sauce for the vegetable.

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Sauces of different kinds play their part in preparing canned foods in appetizing ways. For canned asparagus, Hollandaise sauce; for whole hominy, cheese sauce, or tomato, or Spanish sauce. The last two are also good sauces for canned fish and some canned meats.

With canned fruits, many add a few drops of lemon juice to bring out an otherwise mild flavor like that of pears, figs, or berries. Crystallized ginger or ginger root goes well with canned pears, just as cinnamon does with prunes or apple sauce, or mint with cherries. Broiling canned peaches and apricots brings out more flavor. Fried pineapple is another example of a canned product enhanced by cooking. Combining canned fruits with cheese makes good salads with little trouble.

Canned meats and poultry need the same seasonings every good cook uses with the fresh products. There are the peppery seasonings - black papper, cayenne, tabasco, Worcestershire, and chili sauce; herbs like bay, thyme, sage, basil, celery leaves, parsley; curry powder; garlic; mushrooms; paprika and soy; salt-meat flavors - salt pork, ham, bacon. Any of these can be used in gravy or stuffing.

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